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AUTHOR	Brain, Teresa
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ABSTRACT

These unit lessons are designed to supplement a study of India. The lessons provide enrichment activities in history, mythology and religion, social customs, and demographics. Though originally designed for ninth-grade world geography students, the lessons are appropriate for use in grades 6-12 by students with a variety of skill levels and learning modalities. The lessons consist of four units. All four units emphasize connections between cultures, in forming points of identity and commonality. Titles of the units are: (1) "An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind: Teaching Modern Indian History through the Film 'Gandhi'"; (2) "You Who Have Sprung from Heaven and Earth: A Self-Directed Exploration of Hindu Mythology"; (3) "Tradition and Modernity: Forming Connections between Cultures"; and (4) "Discovering Demographics: A Lesson in Reading, Interpreting, and Displaying Demographic Data." Each unit contains a rationale, sources, strategies, and evaluation options. (BT)

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CURRICULUM PROJECTS DEVELOPED BY 1998 SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

Exploring India

An Interdisciplinary Approach

by
Teresa Brain
La Grande High School
La Grande, Oregon

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Teresa Brain
La Grande High School
La Grande, Oregon

These unit lessons are designed to supplement a study of India. They provide enrichment activities in history, mythology and religion, social customs and demographics.

Though originally designed for ninth grade World Geography students, they are appropriate to be used in grades 6 - 12 by students with a variety of skill levels and learning modalities.

In all four units, an emphasis is placed on making connections between cultures, in forming points of identify and commonality.

An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind:

Teaching Modern Indian History through the film Gandhi.

by
Teresa Brain
La Grande High school
La Grande, Oregon

RATIONALE:

- To introduce students to modern Indian history.
- To introduce students to the concept of non - violent civil disobedience.
- To help students form connections between their own history and culture and the history and culture of India.

SOURCES:

- Film: Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*.
- Questions to Guide Viewers of *Gandhi*

STRATEGIES: Distribute the questions. Review the first five or so with students and tell them to look for answers to these questions as they view the film. As the film proceeds, stop it at appropriate intervals and discuss the questions with students. The questions are a combination of comprehension critical analysis and reflective thinking. I discourage students from writing during the film. Rather, I provide time in class to write out the answers after our discussions. This focuses their attention on the film, whose cumulative impact is quite profound.

Questions to Guide Viewers of *Gandhi*

1. What were the two main religions of India before independence?
2. What country did India win independence from?
3. What is nonviolent civil disobedience?

4. What is a common misconception about civil disobedience?

5. What was the first thing that Gandhi used civil disobedience to protest ? In what country?

6. What is meant by western materialism?

7. Why did Gandhi's wife so object to cleaning the latrine? Explain this in terms of Indian social structure.

8. List the three provisions of the South African government pass regarding Indians?

9. When the South African government offered to repeal the act, what did it threaten to do instead?

10. On Gandhi's return to India, he said he supported the war effort. Which war?

11. After the war, what do Indians think should be theirs as a reward for supporting Great Britain's war effort?

12. What was the gist of Gandhi's speech before the Indian Congress after his tour of India?

13. Explain the problem/incident involving indigo.

14. Why does Gandhi tell Charlie to leave India when they meet in prison?

15. What were the results of the Amritsar massacre?

16. Why did the general order his men to open fire?

17. What is a boycott?

18. Explain the following quotation: English factories make the cloth that makes our poverty---Gandhi

19. Explain why wearing homespun garments became a symbol of Indian patriotism.

20. Discuss the following commonly held view: Without the British administration, India would be chaos.

21. Explain the following quotation: An eye for an eye only makes the whole world blind---Gandhi

22. What incident caused Gandhi to fast? What is the results of his fast?

23. On what charge was Gandhi arrested and convicted? Explain why the people in the court rose at his entrance.

24. Explain the following quotation: Non cooperation with evil is a duty---Gandhi.

25. On his march to the sea, Gandhi says that he, not the British, are in control. Explain.

26. Explain the symbolic and political import of making salt.

27. Explain the events that occurred after India gained independence up to when Gandhi was assassinated.

28. Why was Gandhi assassinated? By whom?

Essay /Discussion Questions:

29. What movement in the United States parallels Gandhi's use of nonviolent civil disobedience and his eventual assassination?

30. Discuss the concept of nonviolent civil disobedience. What is it. Describe specific incidents in which Gandhi used it. Explain the power of it. In what ways is it more powerful than guns? What are some of its draw backs, that is, in what circumstances won't it work? Explain.

EVALUATION:

- Option One: Have students select which questions from study guide should be on final test.

- Option Two: Assign an essay to be written from one of the essay question prompts. The first requires some research into United States history; the second entails critical thinking and value clarification and is best done after interactive class discussions.

NOTES:

- The film is about three hours long. I spread it out over an entire week, thus leaving plenty of time for discussion.

- The depiction of the Amritsar massacre is graphic and difficult to watch. I get prior parental approval. Also, I stop the film shortly after this incident for debriefing and discussion.

• Depending on students' previous learning experiences, the following may need to be discussed before viewing:

- passive resistance
- non - violent civil disobedience
- Martin Luther King
- civil rights movement
- Indian colonial history
- traditional Indian caste system
- boycotts

I've successfully taught these concepts in conjunction with the film to (9th grade) students who have relatively little background. Younger students may need more instruction before viewing the film.

You Who Have Sprung from Heaven and Earth:
A Self-Directed Exploration of Hindu Mythology

by
Teresa Brain
La Grande High School
La Grande, Oregon

RATIONALE:

- To introduce students to Hindu mythology.
- To develop students' creativity and imagination.
- To afford students practice in research procedures and techniques.
- To encourage students to grow as self-directed learners.

SOURCES:

- Descriptions of Vishnu and Shiva (Provided below)
- Art supplies: paper, an assortment of markers and colored pencils.
- A variety of books on Hindu mythology. One excellent source: *The World's Great Religions,* edited by Sam Wells and published by Time Books. Another: *Larousse World Mythology,* edited by Pierre Grimal and published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

STRATEGIES:

- Let students choose one of the descriptions of either Vishnu or Shiva provided below. Provide art materials and have students draw the god of their choosing.
- After drawings are completed, motivate and focus students' research by referring to their pictures. Have them generate questions they would like to have answered: Why is Vishnu usually blue? Why is the goddess Ganga in Shiva's hair?
- With questions in hand, students then gather all the information they can about their god. Discoveries are then presented to the class.

• After student presentations, explain the concept of Vaishnavites and Shaivites within the Hindu religion. Show pictures of Shiva and Vishnu sadhus.

Vishnu, the Sustainer

Vishnu is generally represented pictorially as a beautiful adolescent, blue in colour. In his four hands Vishnu holds his conch, the terrible discus, a mass of arms and a lotus-flower. He is dressed like a king, with a jewel-studded crown. On his chest is a tuft of curly hair, the Srivatsa, a particular object of devotion, and the jewel Kaustubha. His mount is the god-bird Garuda.

Shiva (Siva) the Destroyer

Hindu art portrays him in numerous, very different, ways. In his anthropomorphic aspect, he usually has four arms: the two upper hands hold a tambourine and a trident, the two others make gestures of giving and reassuring. In the center of his forehead is a third eye: it is sometimes also scored with three horizontal bands. The god is wrapped in a tiger skin, he wears a serpent as a necklace, another as a sacred cord, and others are wound round his arms. His hair is twisted and often dressed in the high chignon associated with the ascetic and ornamented with a crescent moon. Sometimes the fifth head of Brahma can be seen in the hair, or the goddess Ganga (the Ganges). He is mounted on Nandi, the bull.

EVALUATION: As students have generated the information for this unit, they should also generate the questions to be included on the final test. Each group (of either Vaishnavites or Shaivites) should write ten questions pertaining to its presentation. These questions are administered to the class and corrected by students.

NOTES:

• Gather a variety of sources for students that represent all reading skill levels.

• Encourage students to investigate stories as well as more formal sources such as enclyclopedias.

• An opportunity for more practice with artisic expression can be provided by allowing students to draw additional manifestations of their god as they encounter them in their research and/or to illustrate stories they read that pertain to their god.

• Take care in using the word "mythology." I use it here because I also use it when refering to Christian stories such as Noah and the flood and Jonah and the whale.

• As I introduce the unit, I make some crucial points about religion and the study of it in the public schools:

- Our purpose it to learn, not convert.
- All religions are afforded equal respect in my classroom.
- Religious practices vary widely within each religion.
- Distinctions should be made between traditional practices and texts and modern manifestations of them. A comparison between the religious practices of our early forefathers (Puritans who believed that dancing and doing any work whatsoever on Sunday was immorral) and contemporary religious practices in our own community are helpful in explaining this point.

• In discussing Vaishnavites and Shaivites, I point out that there is not the antagonism that historically has characterized the relationship between many Christians denomination, for example, Catholics and Protestants, Baptists, Quakers, and Mormons. This is a good opportunity to explain the concept of diversity and tolerance within the Hindu tradition.

Tradition and Modernity:
Forming Connections between Cultures

by
Teresa Brain
La Grande High School
La Grande, Oregon

RATIONALE:

- To introduce students to contemporary Indian literature.
- To help students see that some experiences--conflict between generations, for example--are cross cultural.
- To clarify values regarding marriage and traditions.
- To provide students a vehicle by which to identify with a person from a culture different than their own.

SOURCES:

- "Pom's Engagement" can be found in *The Ledge Between the Streams,* by Ved Mehta, published by W. W. Norton.
- Pre-reading questionnaire (included below.)

STRATEGIES:

- Have students fill out the "pre-reading questionnaire."
- Discuss students' individual responses with the class, emphasizing the similarities and differences reflected within the classroom.
- Have students read "Pom's engagement" by Ved Mehta.
- Have students fill out the "pre-reading questionnaire" from Pom's point of view. They may do this individually, in groups of two or three, or as an entire class. When disagreements arise, have students refer back to the text to support their opinion.

• Have students compare Pom's view with her father's. Make a chart illustrating the similarities and differences. This can be done individually, in small groups or as an entire class.

• Have students reread their prewriting responses, making any changes or additions.

• Discuss as a class how students' responses are similar to and difference from Pom's views.

Pre-reading Questions.

Respond to the following. Indicate whether you agree or disagree and explain why.

1. Love is different from falling in love. It doesn't happen overnight or over a period of months. To love a person takes years of living together.

2. You must choose between being independent and being married. Consider this statement: is it more applicable to a woman than a man? visa versa? Explain.

3. What is "ultimate happiness?" That is, what is the path to happiness? As you envision a "happy life" for yourself, what does it entail?

4. What guideline could you offer for picking a partner? Rank them in terms of importance.

5. Think of a conflict you've observed (or participated in) between generations. Explain what the conflict was how it was resolved--or not.

6. Do your parents (or grandparents) have any ideas about things that you consider" old fashion? What are they. Explain.

EVALUATION: Have students write a essay on one of the following topics.

• Compare and contrast your attitude toward marriage and parental authority with Pom's.

• Write a personal essay explaining a conflict you have had involving changing traditions.

• Interview a grandparent or an older person important in your life regarding how courtship and marriage customs have changed in his/her life time.

NOTES:

• Pom's engagement provides a glimpse into marriage practices in India as it depicts an arranged marriage (which a majority of marriages in India currently are) and yet it also reflects how tradition is challenged and modified within contemporary Indian society--and the psychological and social struggles involved in this challenge.

• Students tend to see the differences between themselves and Pom most readily. Direct class discussions to uncover the similarities.

Discovering Demographics:
A Lesson in Reading, Interpreting, and Displaying Demographic Data

by
Teresa Brain
La Grande High School
La Grande, Oregon

RATIONALE:

- To develop student's understandings of demographic data.
- To provide students with a statistical overview of India.
- To develop students critical thinking skills and creativity and ability to work with others towards a common goal.

SOURCES: *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* or other reference source

STRATEGIES: Put students in groups of three or four. Group students heterogeneously. Provide posterboard, markers, rulers, and other art supplies. Give to each group the instructions for the poster project.

POSTER PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

Make an informational poster of India. Take care to make it both informational and visually appealing. Consider neatness, color, variety, and arrangement.

Display 8 of the following statistics. You may be able to combine some data on one graph. Consider carefully before you do this, however.

Population
Population density
Per capita GDP
Motor vehicles in use
Television sets per person
Radios per person
Telephones per person
Life expectancy

Rate of natural increase
Physicians per person
Religion
Ethnic groups
Literacy

Make sure charts and graphs are clearly labeled.

Sometimes, information is best understood when put in perspective. Thus you may want to present statistical information in comparison to some other country. Bangladesh, Pakistan Nepal and the United States are good choices for this.

Include other types of information. You're on your own here in terms of what to include. Maps, photos, drawings are all good choices. Text is acceptable, necessary in some instances, but remember, this is a poster, not an essay.

EVALUATION: Evaluate each poster for visual appeal, accuracy and completeness. Group and individual scores can also be given for productivity.

NOTES:

- Depending on students' familiarity with demographic data and reading and creating graphs and charts, some concepts may need to be taught before assigning the poster project. These include the meaning and significance of population density, per capita, rate of natural increase and other terms. Regardless of students prior learning, a quick review is advised, most easily accomplished in the form a pretest which asks students to define the relevant terms.

- Emphasize that statistics tell us nothing about individuals. India, for example, may have a lower per capaita GDP than the United States, but not every individual living in India is poor. Similarily, there are some very poor people living in the United States.

- Students may need to be instructed in how to arrive at a percent (and what percentages signify) and how to make and label a bar graph. I have students browse through a variety of magazines and reference books in search of creative way to display statistical data.

- I save especially creative posters from previous years to serve as models and inspiration to students.

- I've had luck with requiring a "progress log" of each group. This log consists of a daily record of what the group and each member has accomplished during each work session. For younger students, this helps focus energy and emphasizes the interdependence of the group.

- This assignment also works well when each group is given a different country. After posters are made, each group presents the poster and teaches the rest of the class about the country.

- Have students display completed posters on the wall. This helps create pride in workmanship and keeps quality of work high.

- Before final evaluation, I review posters, putting "post it" notes next to anything I may question (misspellings, unlabeld charts, inaccuracies, etc.) Groups are then free to make any corrections before the final evaluation. This also works well when groups are given the "post it" notes and assigned to "proofread" each others posters.